



Bulletin No. 266

Supplement to the *Tasmanian Naturalist*

April 1992

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club is devoted to the study of all forms of Natural History, and is comprised of both experts and beginners. We cover a wide variety of topics, and we support conservation. Meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month, except January, in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania from 7.45 p.m. Outings are usually held the following weekend, meeting outside the main entrance to the Museum, Macquarie Street.

The Club's address is GPO Box 68A, Hobart, 7001 and the club contact is Don Hird (34 4293).

### Programme

- Thurs. May 7th 7.30p.m.: Our meeting tonight coincides with a free public talk by Dr Denis Saunders on the topic *Can We Combine Agriculture and Nature Conservation?* The starting time for this is 7:30pm. The talk is organised by the Threatened Species Network and will be held in the Life Sciences Lecture Theatre, a room next to our usual meeting place. After this talk there will be a normal meeting of the Club, followed by supper.
- Sat. May 9th 9a.m.: Angie Monks will first speak on "*Hygrophoraceae* of Tasmania — a general introduction to fungi" at the Royal Society Room, Tasmanian Museum. Meet at the usual place for an outing. After the talk we will visit to the Lyrebird Nature Walk at Mt Field National Park to view the autumn's crop of fungi. Bring lunch and a camera with flash, or a steady hand!
- Thurs. June 4th 7.45p.m.: Members' night. Please volunteer a talk at the May meeting or ring Don Hird (34 4293). Members' nights are usually very interesting with a variety of entertainment.
- June 5th–8th Long weekend excursion to Swan Island off the north-east corner of Tasmania. A short flight from Gladstone to Swan Island is included in this trip. At the time of writing all the beds in the house on Swan Island are taken, but campers may still come along. Ring Margaret Mollison (28 2720) for the latest details and arrangements for this weekend.
- Thurs. July 2nd 8p.m.: A speaker from the Department of Mines on fossils.
- Sat. July 4th 10a.m.: A local outing related to the talk on fossils.
- Thurs. Aug. 6th 8p.m.: Special meeting featuring Michael and Susan Cusack, who will describe their year in the wilderness at Kunmunya in the Kimberleys. This adventure was organised by Dick Smith and the *Australian Geographic* magazine. The Cusacks subsequently wrote a book about their adventure and have presented this 90-minute audio-visual many times on the mainland. The Club is bringing the Cusacks from Melbourne for this special night. We will be advertising this event as a public meeting. Tell you friends and relations as this should be a very special night.
- Sat. Aug. 8th 9a.m.: Tentatively an outing to Bruny Island to visit some of the scenic spots and look for early signs of orchids. Michael and Susan Cusack and baby son Liam have been invited to come on this outing. Leader Phil Collier (29 6597).

**New Members** A special welcome to our new members Jean Taylor, John Hamilton, Dr R.G.H. Green and Dr Sue Jones.

**President's report** To begin my first presidential report I would like to thank my predecessor, Phil Collier, whose presidency saw the Club busy and in good shape. The committee and I will continue our programme of quality talks, excursions and publications. I stress to all members that the Club is a co-operative venture. Committee members have a heavy work-load. The visible part of this is the Bulletin and *The Tasmanian Naturalist*. Behind the scenes we organise the programme and various displays, and we write detailed submissions on conservation and related issues on behalf of the Club.

Members who are not on the committee are encouraged to volunteer assistance. For example enveloping of the Bulletin and *The Tasmanian Naturalist* is a 2-3 hour job for 2 people. When did you last help? Members can also assist by suggesting interesting topics or speakers, volunteering for occasional tasks and helping to maintain our public profile.

**New committee** At the AGM in March the following positions were filled: Don Hird (President), Kevin Bonham (Vice-president), Margaret Mollison (Secretary), Gilbert van Munster (Treasurer), Robert Taylor (Naturalist Editor), Phil Collier (Bulletin Editor), Helen Davidson (Committee), Andrew Weinart (Committee). The committee has appointed Sue Collier as Librarian since this meeting. There are still two vacancies on the committee.

**Federation of Field Naturalists Clubs of Tasmania** At the March AGM Phil Collier was elected President of the Federation and Margaret Mollison was elected as Secretary/Treasurer for a two-year term. It was pleasing to have five members of our Club in attendance at the meeting held at Skemps, the country retreat of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club. (See a separate notice about using this facility.) Amongst the other delegates were members of the newly formed Deloraine Field Naturalists Group, who are working hard in a traditional farming region. They have chosen the freshwater lobster as their logo, recognising a special interest in these slow-growing animals whose habitat is under threat. They are also working on a proposal to have the Gog Range proclaimed as a National Park. Phone John Dudley (003) 68 1192 or Jim Nelson (003) 68 1313 for more information. Our best wishes go to the newest member of the Federation.

The next meeting of the Federation will probably be held at the large property Rushy Lagoon in the far north-east of Tasmania. Although this is a long drive from Hobart it is an outstanding opportunity to visit this interesting part of the State during the wild-flower season, and have it interpreted by the local Club members. The meeting will be over the weekend of 19-20 September.

**Thinking of a weekend away?** Two Field Nats Clubs in the north of the State have their own accommodation in the bush.

The Launceston Field Naturalists Club has recently completed superb accommodation at Skemps, about 25 minutes from Launceston on the Scottsdale road. For a minimum of \$10 per night this can be used by families or groups from our Club. Overnight fees are \$5 per adult night or \$10 per family. A full schedule of fees is available, including non-member fees. Contact David Churton (003) 31 8981 for more information.

The Burnie Field Naturalists Club have a shack at Rocky Cape. Although I haven't visited this shack I am sure that the standard is very comfortable. This is also available for members of other Clubs. Contact Barry Dudman (004) 35 1489 for more information.

If either of the contacts mentioned here are unsuccessful Phil Collier (29 6597) will be able to provide alternatives.

**February Weekend Excursion** (This is an edited version of the entry in the outings book by Patti Virtue.) This was a sunny weekend spent at Waddamana, Liawenee, Lake Augusta and the Great Lake with 25 members and friends and five children. Dr Bob Ellis led us

through the history of the Waddamana forest. This started with the Aboriginal Big River Tribe's burning regime for several centuries, which maintained the grassy understory. Later the Europeans attempted to farm it in the 1920's and 1930's. 50 acre blocks were given to the unemployed at the time who, in order to try to improve its grazing potential, ring barked thousands of hectares of trees to no avail. The farming was abandoned in the late 1930s and the regrowth reclaimed these areas.

On Saturday evening Professor Bill Jackson spoke about the geological, botanical and political history of the Central Plateau and all its many problems of sheep, shepherds, rabbits and more sheep. We also set our bat, mammal and insect traps in the evening.

On Sunday morning we released our catch of three brush-tail possums. Later 'Prof' led us through the Liawenee Plains and illustrated the consequences of decades of poor grazing practices. The vascular basalt rocks (gas bubbles remaining in the rocks resulting from rapid cooling) are prone rapid weathering compared to dolorite. Frost action, sheep and rabbit grazing and a succession of intentional burns have left the area badly degraded. We had lunch under a lone pencil pine by Lake Augusta whilst, wading belly deep, the budding young zoologists played with the frogs.

**Sugar Gliders at Lake Sorell** The outing on April 4th was led by Ron Mawby to his property of nearly 1000 acres near Lake Sorell. Unlike most surrounding country, Ron manages his property as a nature reserve. He has built a quaint bush-hut from local materials, which was the base for our visit.

Ron has studied the sugar gliders in the vicinity of his hut for several years. The night before our visit he had set his sugar glider traps in the trees around the hut, and had caught three sugar gliders. To access the traps Ron had to climb high into a cider gum, using large nails hammered into the tree. Some members followed Ron into the tree for a close look, but most preferred to keep their feet on the ground and watch through binoculars. The sugar gliders were brought down in cotton bags. We were able to inspect the animals closely before they were released. The plan was to release them uphill on a large dead tree. The sugar gliders then quickly scamper up the tree and glide to another tree. Normally, this is the only way that gliding behaviour can be seen in day light. Like all the best plans .... one sugar glider escaped from our grasp and climbed up two of our members, gliding between them before gliding off towards the nearest tree!

**When do meetings start?** There has been some discussion recently about when general meetings should start. (It seems that the last President has set a bad example!) It was resolved at the April general meeting that 7:45p.m. would continue to be the advertised starting time for meetings. Often meetings may not open formally at this time, as informal discussion prior to the meeting is enjoyable and useful, particularly for committee members. However, the President may open the meeting at any time from 7:45p.m. until 8:00p.m. The President ruled (his words) that meetings would open by 8:00p.m. at the latest. Bring out your stop watches to make sure!



## MAMMAL SURVEY GROUP

In 1991 the Tasmanian Field Nats formally commenced active regular mammal survey, with monthly excursions supplementing regular club activities. We have permits to do capture - release surveys and undertake spotlight and other techniques. This year we aim to continue our investigation of the Mt Wellington Range and to expand our techniques into provision of nest boxes. We usually meet a fortnight after the scheduled club monthly excursion.

Contact is Don Hird - ph 344 293 (H), 215 912 (W).

We welcome new people on a regular or occasional basis.

Program: May - July 1992.

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| May  | 23rd - 24th<br>Cygnet area guided by Lyn Forster, Owen and Co, where they have been successful in locating species such as bettongs and quolls. Details to be confirmed later.   |
| June | 27th - 28th (note later week than usual)<br>Mt Nelson area. Despite its proximity to Hobart and sometimes suburban nature, this area still holds some interesting habitats and native mammals. An excursion close to Hobart for the Winter solstice. |
| July | 18th - 19th<br>Chimney Pot Hill area. Continuing our Mt Wellington theme, this substantial foothill has a range of habitats worth exploring.   |

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